

Dear legislators:

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony and information on the property referenced in Sec. 8 of this year's Conveyance Bill. I am writing to say that Sec. 8 of the 2014 Conveyance Bill (5550) **should be approved**. This conveyance will benefit the town, properly pay homage to Captain George Comer who deeded the land to the State and remove a maintenance burden of the overtaxed state park system.

The property in question is situated between State Rt. 434 (Mt. Parnassus Road) and the old Mt. Parnassus Road. The road was realigned in the 30's, with the old section being transferred to the town. The center parcel was the location of the Mt. Parnassus fire tower until it was removed in the seventies. The property was also used as a picnic area and/or roadside rest as is indicated by the rustic stone fireplaces still in place. The center parcel also has a concrete "plaque" to Capt. George Comer, which is cemented to a very large boulder. Capt. Comer deeded the property to the state in the 30's. The property is shaped such that it cannot be developed in any way, limiting its use to open space or an access to the adjacent 130 acres of East Haddam open space and municipal property, known as the Harris property.

This is a legitimate use of the conveyance bill. As stated previously, the property will ONLY be used to provide an improved access driveway (better sight lines) to the Harris Property to the south. Besides the open space portion of the property (purchased with a DEEP Open Space grant), the municipal portion is being managed for agriculture. The town has received three State grants to (1) reclaim the former fields from their "grown-up" condition (completed), (2) fence the fields to exclude deer (completed) and (3) erect a barn-type building to educate new and old farmers about good food preservation practices - such as canning and freezing - and modern organic farming methods, for example. The property in question will be better maintained by East Haddam as open space than is currently being done by State Park staff. The local DEEP manager of the property has expressed no objections. Currently, he has very limited staff to take care of his many, many state properties and this would be another burden off his back. With this property under town stewardship, Capt. George Comer, famous Arctic and Hudson Bay explorer, whaler, cartographer, author and East Haddam resident (his home is across the street) will finally get some additional recognition through informational signage, educating all about this remarkable man.

East Haddam Land Use Administrator Jim Ventres and I have worked with the great-grandson of Capt. Comer to address the family concerns regarding the original language of Sec. 8. Those issues were discussed with Representative Ziobron who agreed to amend the language. There was never any intent NOR is there any need to modify the deed restrictions in the deed from Comer to the State of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

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President - East Haddam Land Trust
Chairman - East Haddam Conservation Commission
Member - East Haddam Open Space Committee
Retired - Assistant Director - State Parks Division